



# Hope for Success: Returning Home

Commission on  
Equity &  
Opportunity  
Reentry Working  
Group

Overview of Report & Recommendations

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# Background and Planning for this report

- The Connecticut General Assembly's Commission on Equity & Opportunity is mandated by state law to focus on the quality of life for members of the African-American, Asian Pacific American and the Latino & Puerto Rican populations in Connecticut.
- Special Act No. 18-14 calls for the CEO to establish a working group to study housing options for persons reentering the community after incarceration and to recommend an evidence-based housing policy for such persons to the joint standing committee of the CGA having cognizance of matter relating to housing by January 1, 2019.

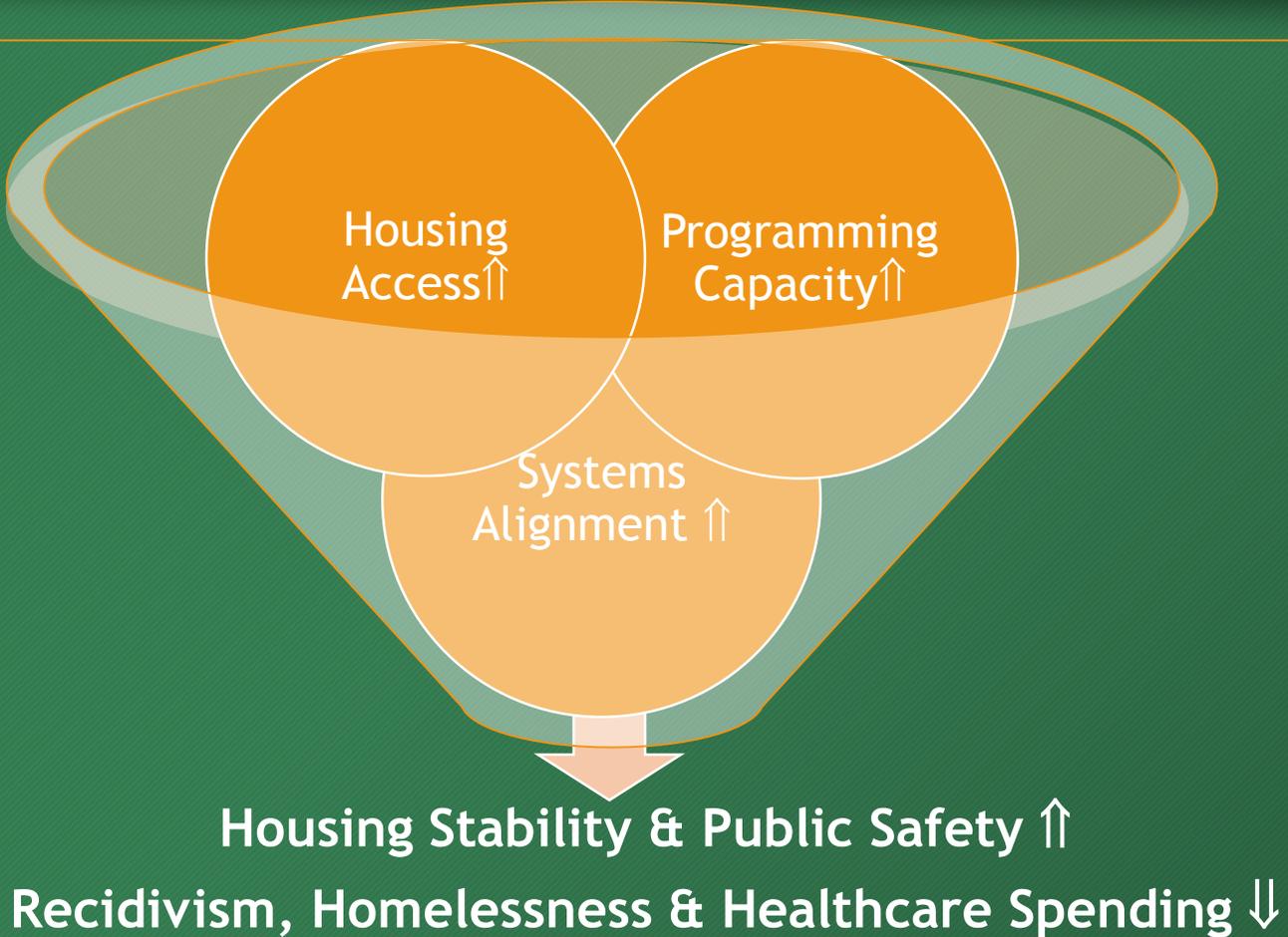
# Background & Methods

- Beginning in July of 2018, the CEO engaged over 65 stakeholders to be part of the Reentry and Housing Working Group.
- The group convened five times between August and December 2018.
- Four working group subcommittees were established: 1) Program Innovation and Evaluation, 2) Community Engagement, 3) Law, Regulation and Policy, and 4) Legislation and Advocacy.

# Methods continued

- Presentations from the Council of State Governments, and the Corporation for Supportive Housing on evidence-based models from CT and other states. (See Pg. 8 for a full list of presentations)
- Information from individuals with direct experience via a listening tour held in three locations across CT—Willimantic, New London, and Hartford.
- Each subcommittee submitted their recommendations to the CEO in written reports in December.

# Recommendations Overview



## GOAL ONE

**Strengthen policies to prevent discrimination in both public and private housing and remove unnecessary barriers to housing access for individuals with a criminal record.**



# Policy Changes to Section 8 and RAP Administrative Plans on Eligibility for Housing Assistance

*Strategy  
One*

All Connecticut Housing Authorities should:

- Use a three-year lookback period when reviewing applicant eligibility.
- Remove any automatic denials for criminal history unless required by federal law.

# Remove Barriers to Family Reunification for Families with Housing Assistance

## Strategy Two

- Update DOH's policy for families with housing assistance through Housing Authorities. For family members returning from prison that wish to reunite, standard lookback periods will not apply.
- In community corrections, public housing and Section 8 addresses are made valid locations for parolees provided reentrants are formally added to the lease.

# Strengthen anti-discrimination laws in housing and Guidance, Clarity, and Protection for Landlords

## Strategy Three

- Ban the Box legislation for housing to make it illegal to look at criminal records beyond seven years. When landlords do consider criminal records, they must also consider mitigating circumstances, rehabilitation, & liability protection.
- Clean Slate Legislation to institute state-wide automatic sealing of all convictions after 7 years.
- Certificate of Housability, which would work like a certificate of employability to increase access to housing.

## *Strategy Three* continued...

- Reinstatement of the previous DOH's Security Deposit Guarantee program that was defunded, and make sure that reentrants are eligible.
- DOH will enhance efforts to educate the public about anti-discrimination laws in housing and any amendments to Public Housing Authority guidelines for people with prior convictions.

# Reduce the Barriers Facing Low to No Risk People on the Sex Offender Registry

*Strategy  
Four*

- Our sex offender registry is changed back to its original intent: a Law Enforcement tool for monitoring high-risk individuals so that the vast majority of people convicted of sexual offenses who pose no danger can reintegrate into their communities and build productive lives.

## GOAL TWO

**Invest in Evidence-based Housing Interventions  
that will have the Greatest Impact  
on Reducing Homelessness, Housing Instability  
and Recidivism for the Reentry Population.**

# Conduct a Comprehensive Needs & Resources Assessment

*Strategy  
Five*

- This assessment would include those services rendered by state and community providers.
- Critical to this assessment would be ensuring the establishment and tracking of outcomes.

# Invest in Evidence-based Housing Interventions to address the Gaps in Services & Needs

*Strategy  
Six*

Evidence-Based Programs to expand for Reentry populations:

- Immediate Shelter and Housing Opportunities
- Rapid Re-Housing with Critical Time Intervention Enhancement
- Supportive Housing
- Medical Respite and Connecting to Community Care Teams (CCTs)

## GOAL THREE

Improve Coordination & Data Integration  
between Corrections, Housing, and  
Reentry to Drive Stronger Results



# Implement a Standardized Statewide Corrections Discharge Planning Protocol

## *Strategy Seven*

- Use of SAMSHA GAINS Re-Entry Initiative, the Assess, Plan, Identify, and Coordinate (APIC) Model for Post-Release Planning.
- Apply Shelter Diversion Strategies.
- Utilize Patient and Housing Navigators.
- Reinstate Department of Correction Job Center initiatives.
- Educate Parole Officers on Section 8 & Family Reunification Strategy

# Improve Tracking and Exchange of Data on Housing Status of individuals who are Released

## *Strategy Eight*

- Improve tracking of housing status and exchange of data for the justice-involved population.
- Pilot a housing assessment tool in corrections to assess housing needs & homelessness.
- Shelters and Halfway Houses implement 'Hello' Line for employment purposes.
- Update policies regarding inmates' ability to access 211 prior to release.

# Ongoing use of Data and Analysis to Inform Planning, Tracking, and Resource Allocation.

## *Strategy Nine*

- State-funded interventions should involve rigorous evaluations, and should supply data for cost/benefit analysis using the Results First model.
- Better data informs decision-making, linking data on housing and other reentry interventions across agencies to assess the quality of services provided to returning citizens.

# Concluding Remarks



- Across the political spectrum, Connecticut citizens overwhelmingly support policies that promote “second chances”.
- These policy recommendations will require some upfront investments, however, based on best-practice research, one can expect returns in future years from reduced expenditures for prisons, shelters, & avoidable hospital admissions. Provides immediate returns in the lives of families who are reunited, productive and successful.
- If we continue to reinvest these dollars back into the communities that have the highest incarceration rates & the greatest inequities, we can restore safety, hope and fair opportunities to our families & neighborhoods.
- This in turn will bring about a new cycle of urban renewal and economic revitalization for our entire state.